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DESERET NEWS, TUES. P.M./WED. A.M., SEPT. 29-30, 1998

Company gets OK to mine but probably won't for now

Associated Press

A Colorado company has received permission to begin mining copper in southeastern Utah's San Juan County, but a sagging market is expected to delay the operation.

A ruling this week by a federal administrative judge cleared the

way for Denver-based Summo Minerals Corp. But Summo officials said current copper prices do not justify working the mine, anyway.

The Bureau of Land Management approved the mine in March 1996. The following month, sev-

eral groups, including the National Wildlife Federation and the Mineral Policy Center, as well as two individuals, appealed. In June 1996, operation of the mine was stayed until the appeal was decided.

Summo company officials said

the delay has been costly.

"A great deal of damage has been done to the shareholders of this company," said spokesman Clive Massey.

The groups opposing the mine said it would pollute groundwater and were upset BLM did not require Summo to backfill four open

pits in Lisbon Valley, about 25 miles northeast of Monticello.

As part of the administrative judge's decision, the BLM must clarify one of its reasons for allowing the company not to backfill the pits.

Roger Flynn, an attorney repre-

sending groups who appealed BLM approval of the project, did not know if they would contest this week's decision. But Flynn, of the Western Mining Action Project in Boulder, Colo., said the ruling does show the BLM's approval of the project is flawed.